



**SOUTH DAKOTA  
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**

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PIERRE, S.D. – Recognized for strong commitment and unending dedication to serving veterans and their families in South Dakota, county and tribal veterans' service officers (VSO) and staff from the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs were recognized at an awards program Monday, Aug. 29, at the Pierre Ramkota Hotel.

The annual event, organized by the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs, was held in conjunction with the veterans' benefits training conference for county and tribal VSOs from across the state.

"I believe it is important to recognize individuals who provide outstanding service to our state's veterans," said Deputy Secretary Steven Harding. "Working together, we are successful in serving South Dakota's veterans and their families."

Ken Irwin, of Custer, received the Jim Melgaard Award, which distinguishes Ken as the 2011 County Veteran Service Officer of the Year. As the VSO for Custer County, Ken was recognized for his outstanding dedication to veterans.

Jerry Lolley, of Sturgis, representing Meade County, was awarded the 2011 Robert Lindblad Award. He was cited for excellence in outreach efforts.

Jesse Krause of Milbank was presented the 2011 Les Mord Award. Krause, VSO for Grant County, was cited for his excellence in education benefits for veterans.

Aaron Pollard of Sioux Falls was awarded the 2011 Glenn Green Advocacy Award. Pollard, supervisor for the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs Claims Office in Sioux Falls, was recognized for his commitment to veterans, mentoring VSOs, and expertise on veterans' regulations and benefits.

Deputy Secretary Harding said those who were honored at Monday's conference exemplify the commitment that South Dakota's VSOs and the Department's staff provide to veterans and their families. "We serve as advocates for veterans and their dependents and survivors. Our goal is to ensure that all South Dakota veterans and their families receive professional assistance, advocacy and counseling."

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(Photos available upon request)